



News Release

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Summer's Here – and So is the Ozone

Why Utahns should keep an 'eye on the skies'

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Departments of Health (UDOH) and Environmental Quality (DEQ) have developed resources and recommendations for outdoor physical activity in the summertime to help avoid unhealthy exposure to ozone air pollution.

Ozone is created by the sun's heat and light acting upon gases and pollution in the atmosphere. Ozone levels change throughout the day and are generally highest in the afternoon hours.

Exposure to high summer ozone levels can cause coughing, wheezing, and chest tightness, worsen allergy and asthma symptoms, and irritate the eyes, nose and throat. The severity of symptoms can vary depending on a person's sensitivity to ozone, and can be felt immediately or as late as one or more days after exposure. People with heart and lung conditions, children, seniors, and people who work or exercise outdoors can be more sensitive to ozone.

“The most serious effects of ozone air pollution come from heavy or prolonged breathing of outdoor air when ozone levels are above the federal standard of .075 ppm,” said DEQ toxicologist Steve Packham, Ph.D. “It is important to check current ozone levels before outdoor activities, and especially before exercising outdoors.”

DEQ provides hourly ozone level updates on its website at www.airquality.utah.gov.

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The agencies have developed materials to help Utahns assess their sensitivity to ozone. Available online, they include *Recommendations for Outdoor Physical Activity During Ozone Season (May – September)*, and an ozone tracking tool. The ozone tool can be used to track outdoor activities, ozone levels, and symptoms experienced.

“By monitoring ozone levels and the symptoms you experience during outdoor activities, you can determine what level of ozone you are sensitive to,” said Kellie Baxter, UDOH Asthma Program. “This will help you plan your day and decide when to move your activities indoors to reduce your exposure.”

Video tutorials are available online to help Utahns assess their sensitivity to ozone using the ozone tracking tool.

To help Utahns plan outdoor activities during ozone season, UDOH and DEQ guidelines recommend:

- The best time for outdoor summer physical activity is before noon or after 6:00 p.m.
- If you are physically active between noon and 6:00 pm:
 - Consider light to moderate activity (e.g., walking instead of running).
 - Consider indoor activities.
- Discuss physical activities with your doctor, especially if you have lung disease or a heart condition.

A copy of the physical activity recommendations, ozone air quality fact sheets, ozone tracking sheet, and video tutorials are available at www.health.utah.gov/asthma or by calling the UDOH Health Resource Line at 1-888-222-2542.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public’s health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.